



“Creating Community Connections for a Healthy Future Part II”

City of Waukesha
Parks, Recreation & Forestry Department
Strategic Plan Update 2018-2022



Letter from the Director

On behalf of the City of Waukesha Parks, Recreation & Forestry Department and Board, I am pleased to present our updated 2018-2022 Strategic Plan – *“Creating Community Connections for a Healthy Future-Part II.”*

This plan, was built upon the foundation of the previous plan and is a result of a very inclusive process that involved both internal and external community stakeholders to help identify priority goals and develop specific action plans for the next five years and beyond. The completion of our statistically valid Community Needs Assessment “tool” in 2017 played a pivotal role in the identification and development of Strategic Plan goals and objectives. Overall, the process of strategic planning will greatly aid our efforts toward achieving our vision while continuing to fulfill our mission. In addition, results/analysis from our recently

Strategic planning is a “living process” that requires regular review and updates to keep initiatives focused and relevant. We are dedicated to accomplishing the identified goals and will continue to work closely with the community to ensure that our organization is moving in a positive direction and at a high level of service to our residents!

Respectfully submitted,



Ron Grall, Director
City of Waukesha
Parks, Recreation & Forestry Department

WPRF Vision

“Gold Medal” services...Exceptional quality of life!

WPRF Mission

To be responsive and committed in providing essential park, recreation and urban forestry services making our community a desirable place to live, work and play!

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
SUMMARY OF RESEARCH	9
STRATEGIC PLANNING SUMMARY	16
ACTION PLANS	17



Acknowledgements

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

All members of the WPRF Management Team who participated in the updating of the WPRF strategic plan.

CITY OF WAUKESHA PARKS, RECREATION & FORESTRY DEPARTMENT BOARD

Wayne Merchle, Board President
Joan E. Vehlow, Board Vice President
Mike Volpano, Board Secretary
Erica Mueller, School District Representative
Alderman Steve Johnson, Board Member
Alderman Dean Lemke, Board Member
John Schmitz, Board Member
Michael Thurston, Board Member

COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

It was important to reach out to as many groups and individuals as possible in order to gain the most diverse input possible. The community input process included participants from throughout the City of Waukesha, Park Board members, Chamber of Commerce members, WPRF staff, Waukesha Community Foundation, City Government, Advisory Board members, citizens, Carroll University staff, former mayors, Waukesha Tennis Association, UW Extension, Salvation Army, St. Vincent DePaul, WPRF Friends and Foundation members, Civic Band members, several Alderman, Parents Place, PFOM, HAWS, Soccer Association members, Waukesha School Foundation, Waukesha Schools, School District Board members, the Police Department, and volunteers.

Focus Groups/Public Meetings

Citizens recognize that the City of Waukesha provides a wide variety of facilities, programs, and services to City residents related to parks, recreation, and forestry. Focus groups, public meetings, and stakeholder and staff interviews provided important input used as the basis for developing a statistically-valid survey.

Citizen Needs Assessment Survey

Results from a statistically-valid community survey are summarized and highlighted in the main report. All of this information provides a framework to understand Waukesha's park, recreation and forestry needs, and direction for future improvements and enhancements. The survey was conducted using three primary methods: 1) a mail-back survey, 2) an online, invitation-only web survey to further encourage response from those residents already within the defined invitation sample, and 3) an open-link online survey for members of the public who were not part of the invitation sample. A total of 3,000 surveys were mailed to a

random sample of City of Waukesha residents in November 2016. After accounting for undeliverable addresses (76 total), 2,924 survey mailings were delivered and 324 completed responses were received, resulting in a response rate of 10.9 percent. The margin of error for the 324 statistically valid responses is approximately +/- 5.4 percentage points calculated for questions at 50 percent response. Additionally, the open link survey received 104 completed responses.

Open link respondents were considerably more likely to report that they have used and are slightly more satisfied with WPRF facilities and customer services, participated in WPRF programs, and attended WPRF events than invitation sample respondents. As with the participants in the focus groups and public meetings, the survey respondents indicated a high level of satisfaction relative to the majority of parks, recreation and forestry programs, and services provided by the City. Priorities for future improvements and enhancements were identified by survey respondents and closely mirrored those of the earlier public input opportunities. Survey respondents also showed a desire to maintain what is currently available in Waukesha and build upon the strengths of the WPRF.

- *Doing a good job*
- *Have had opportunity to see the after school program personally. It is an excellent program. The leaders at Banting school are awesome along with the younger staff that interact with the children. My grandchildren absolutely love it. Keep up the great job!*
- *I enjoy fitness classes at the Schuetze Center and recognize the improvements to the gym and playground. I also enjoy the community events such as Oktoberfest, Janboree and Friday Night Live. Keep up the good work!*
- *I love the WPRF!*
- *I truly love and appreciate all that WPRF does for the families of Waukesha!! It is a huge selling point for living in this city. Thank you!*
- *Most parks and recreation facilities are good with us*
- *Thank you for making these amenities available!*
- *Thank you for pretty flowering trees. My mother called them to my attention, and they remind me of her.*
- *The Cool School staff is AMAZING!!!!!!! Also the staff at the front desk is wonderful.*
- *The parks are one of the best things about living in the city of Waukesha.*
- *We have 3 adult boys who grew up in the WPRF. We were always happy with their benefits.*

PLANNING TEAM

Chamness Group
18080 Lakeview Drive
Suite 101
Brookfield, WI 53045
Phone: 414-271-7900

GreenPlay, LLC
1021 E. South Boulder Road, Suite N
Louisville, Colorado 80027
Phone: 303-439-8369

RRC Associates, LLC
4770 Baseline Road, Suite 360
Boulder, CO 80303
Phone: 303-449-6559

COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS

This project and publication was a collaborative effort. Comments and inquiries are welcome and should be directed to:

City of Waukesha Parks, Recreation & Forestry Department

Attn: Ron Grall, Director
1900 Aviation Drive
Waukesha, WI 53188
rgrall@waukesha-wi.gov
262-524-3737



Executive Summary

The Waukesha Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department (WPRF) has earned a reputation over the years for providing a wide range of diverse and high quality services to the citizens of the City of Waukesha and its visitors. Parks, boulevards, trees and vegetation, sports and recreation venues, park buildings, pools and programs have been developed, implemented and well maintained by a skilled and customer-focused staff. Through careful and regular citywide feedback and measurement, the department has earned an excellent reputation in the community and beyond. These collective actions have earned the department the distinction of becoming an NRPA National Gold Medal Award recipient in 2011 and National Accredited Agency in 2013.

WPRF has done a good job over the years of working to understand the needs of its constituents through careful research and needs assessments. They have used that data to help them change and grow in ways that are appropriate to the needs of the people in the communities they serve. With the data as a basis, they worked with their board and management team to develop a clear future vision, defined goals to achieve the vision and created actionable steps to define specifically how goals will be realized.

This strategic plan update is an example of the WPRF's commitment to create change in positive and proactive ways to best benefit the City of Waukesha. To this end they engaged Chamness Group to help with the updating of their strategic plan. Chamness Group worked with the team in developing the 2010-2015 plan and subsequent update of their action plans in 2015. This updated strategic plan maintains and expands their efforts in:

- Environmental Stewardship
- Expanded partnerships and community connections
- Internal efficiencies
- Increased and improved services and offerings
- Build upon the 2010-2015 Strategic Plan

The key to their success is in the WPRF's ability to continue to provide exceptional customer service, improved communications/collaborations and to build efficiencies and services through internal and external partnerships. These goals are intended to not only allow improvement and growth, but provide the basis to earn another Gold Medal Award and achieve National Accreditation.

VISIONING

The following is the result of the visioning exercise completed in conjunction with PRF Board members. Please note the vision statements below are not intended to take the place of the current Vision and Mission of the department, but instead act as the driving force behind the development of action plan, goals and objectives:

Vision 2022

In 2022 Waukesha Parks, Recreation and Forestry has achieved the following:

- WPRF offers beautiful, safe and secure parks and efficient and updated facilities that have become an integral part of the health and welfare of the community
- Increased public/private partnerships that allow us to offer exceptional attractions unique to our region, creating greater economic impact to our city.
- We are champions of environmental stewardship, protection and education.
- We have grown through a process of continuous evaluation and assessment and working to understand the community and their needs
- We have positioned ourselves as a leader to bring people to the table to meet challenges.
- We have successfully improved programming for all ages

Strategic Goals 2018-2022

1. Further improve operations and customer service.
2. Become a Two-Time National Gold Medal Award Winner and maintain CAPRA National Accreditation status.
3. Provide appealing, safe and secure parks and trails with efficient and updated facilities.
4. Promote environmental stewardship, protection and education, encouraging outdoor experiences.
5. Further utilize partnerships, sponsorships, and community connections to offer exceptional services.
6. Provide comprehensive and inclusive recreational experiences and citywide celebrations

Summary of Research

RESEARCH PROCESS

Building an inclusive assessment process was important to the department. Understanding the concerns and needs of both outside constituents and knowing where staff and board members see potential for the organization to grow was imperative to create a holistic and comprehensive strategic plan for the next five years. Efforts were made to ensure all stakeholders had a voice in the assessment process. Interviews and focus groups were inclusive and conducted with the following groups:

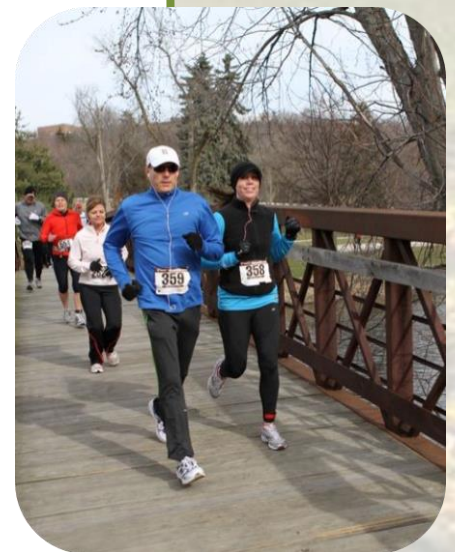
- Management and supervisors
- Department front-line staff, seasonal employees and volunteers
- Board members
- Community leaders
- City political leaders
- Area business representatives
- Community members at large

The following summary highlights the key findings as identified by the joint consulting teams:

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Generally, findings from the public input process consistently identified an appreciation of existing facilities, programs, and services being offered by WPRF. All facilities and programs were indicated to be meeting the community's needs. Satisfaction with WPRF facilities and programs is generally quite high. For all the listed current facilities and programs, respondents provided an average rating of three or higher on the five-point scale, indicating that each of these amenities is adequately meeting the needs of Waukesha residents. Invitation respondents generally indicated that trails and pathways were the most important facility priority and that community events were the most important program priority. Both amenities were rated as being currently satisfactory; however, these should continue to be monitored in the future as they are important to a large proportion of responding households.

Top general priority is quality and maintenance of facilities and amenities. Throughout the survey results, both quantitative and qualitative, the maintenance of existing parks and facilities emerged as one of the most important areas of focus for the City of Waukesha. The prioritization of maintaining and improving existing amenities was also reinforced through the open-ended comments.



Invitation respondents indicated that affordability in pricing and user fees is crucial not only as an area of improvement for the long term, but also an issue that, if addressed, would likely increase their usage of WPRF offerings. In addition, invitation respondents were not supportive of additional funding. Funding mechanisms like increased user fees, sales and property taxes, and a bond referendum were not rated favorably by respondents.

Open link sample, predominantly WPRF users, prioritized indoor recreation facilities. Open link respondents were considerably more likely to indicate that they have used WPRF offerings in the past year when compared to invitation respondents, likely as a result of the open link survey email campaign to the WPRF contact list. In addition, open link respondents placed high priority and high importance on indoor facilities such as recreation centers and aquatics facilities, whereas invitation respondents were more likely to prioritize outdoor amenities like trails and pathways.

The research process for WPRF was inclusive, thorough and provided rich data. The research looked at numerous aspects of WPRF's involvement in community life, and after comparing both statistics and opinions, the results provided a wide array of information on how residents feel about WPRF.

The conversations had been robust, encouraging, honest, and filled with constructive criticisms and suggestions aimed at making WPRF a better department for the community's benefit. Clear, widespread beliefs emerged from the research. All agreed that WPRF provides numerous services to the community that are high-quality, diverse and accessible to everyone living in the City of Waukesha. The following are select key findings from the Community Needs Assessment which were used as the foundation in the development of the strategic plan.

Importance of Programs Currently Offered

- Respondents provided relatively moderate importance ratings for all the listed programs, with treating ash trees for Emerald Ash Borer topping the list.
- Outdoor recreation programs, fitness and wellness programs, and community events also received relatively high ratings.

Importance of Facilities to Household

- The facilities rated as most important include trails and and community and neighborhood parks.

Degree to Which Community Needs Are Met by Facilities

- Respondents generally indicated that all facilities are currently meeting Waukesha's needs, providing relatively high ratings for all of the listed facilities.
- The highest needs-met ratings were provided for community and neighborhood parks, baseball/softball fields, and trails and pathways.
- The Scheutze Recreation Center, Rotary Building at Frame Park, park shelters, soccer fields, E.B. Shurts Environmental Center, and aquatics facilities followed closely behind.

Satisfaction with Programs

- Current WPRF programs are highly satisfactory.
- Community events was the highest rated program, followed by youth sports, family programs, outdoor recreation programs, preschool programs, and youth after school/summer camp programs.
- The high average ratings provided for all programs indicate that Waukesha residents have a high level of satisfaction with WPRF programs overall.

Top Program Priorities

- Top priority is community events
- Other top priorities include fitness and wellness programs, family programs, treating ash trees for Emerald Ash Borer and outdoor recreation programs.

Top Three Values WPRF Should Focus On (the following six values were all closely identified being respondent's top three values):

- Maintenance of parks and facilities.
- Affordability of services.
- Investing in youth.
- Preserving natural areas.
- Safety and security.
- Promoting health/wellness/active lifestyles.

Effectiveness of Volunteer Program

- Volunteers are viewed quite favorably overall.

Importance of Adding/Expanding Facilities

- Improving trail and pathway connectivity was identified as most important.
- Shelters with restrooms, open space/natural area preservation, and playgrounds rated as important.
- Several facilities including pickleball courts, skate parks, volleyball courts, a disc golf course, football fields, basketball courts, tennis courts, soccer fields, baseball/softball fields, a new recreation center, Toboggan Run, new parks, and a publicly funded fitness center should probably be considered as lower priorities than the other listed facilities for future enhancements.

Top Three Priorities to Add, Expand, or Improve

The following seven priorities were all closely identified being respondent's top three priorities:

- Improving trail and pathway connectivity is the top priority by far.
- Pathways and trail connectivity also received the largest percentage of respondents selecting it as their single most important priority
- Other top priorities include expanded aquatics facilities, shelters with restrooms, open space/natural area preservation, playgrounds, and dog parks.



Most Important Areas that Would Increase Use of Facilities

- Awareness of programs, condition/maintenance of parks or facilities, lighting in parks and on trails, additional community events, more attractive pricing/user fees, and additional facilities and amenities were identified as area if addressed would increase use of facilities.
- Less than one in ten respondents reported that parking, WiFi connectivity, or increased customer service/staff knowledge would increase their use of WPRF facilities.

Allowance of Dogs in Parks, Trails, and Pathways

- Respondents were in favor of permitting dogs on leash (six foot maximum) in all city parks, trails and pathways.

Communication

- Forty percent (40%) indicated that WPRF is effectively reaching them with information on offerings, indicating that there is room for improvement. The average effectiveness rating for reaching respondents with information on offerings is 3.2.
- Effectiveness ratings for seeking feedback and improving performance were marginally lower, with approximately a third of invitation respondents providing a 4 or 5 rating and 25 percent providing a 1 or 2 rating. The average effectiveness rating for seeking feedback from the community and improving on performance is 3.1.
- Respondents identified the WPRF Activity Guide, Internet/WPRF website, and email from the City, local media, or social networking as the best ways to receive information on WPRF facilities and programs.

Financial Choices/Fees

- Overall, respondents were generally unsupportive of all the potential funding mechanisms.
- Support was strongest for an increase in user fees.
- Half of invitation respondents said fee increases would not limit their ability to participate at all.



PLANNING PROCESS METHODOLOGY

GreenPlay, along with RRC Associates, led WPRF's Community Needs Assessment. The process was inclusive of all members of the community, and the public was given many opportunities to participate through Focus Groups, Stakeholder Meetings, Public Meetings, an Invitation Survey, and an Open Link Survey. A detailed Market Assessment looking at Demographics and Trends was completed. The project provided an understanding of the community's needs, attitudes, interests, and priorities, and the results will aid the City in planning for policy making and management decision making.

Project Coordination, Strategic Kick-Off, and Determination of Critical Success Factors

- Strategic Kick Off
- Critical Success Factors identified

Public and Stakeholder Engagement

- Staff Focus Group Meeting
- Public Focus Group and Stakeholder Meetings
- Park and Rec Board Meeting
- Open Public Forum

Statistically-Valid Communitywide Survey

- Invitation Survey and Online Open Link Survey

Market Assessment

- Demographics and Population Projections
- Trends Analysis
- Potential Program Analysis

Final Plan, Presentations, and Deliverables

- Results of the Public Input Process
- Results of the Statistically-Valid Survey
- Presentation of the final plan

SWOT ANALYSIS

The Chamness Group served as the lead team in the SWOT Analysis Process and utilized, in part, the following findings from the Community Needs Assessment Focus Groups:

What are the strengths of WPRF that should be continued over the next several years?

- Services for the elderly (Senior Center)
- Exceptional quality of the staff *Fun bunch to work with
- Summer Park Rec programs
- Employment for youth – high school, college
- Special programs
- Appeal to all ages
- Partnerships developed – Constantly seeking new partnerships *(school district)
- Focus on family and healthy living
- Environmental piece
- Amount & diversity of parks/facilities
- Well maintained and beautiful parks

Conversely, what are the major areas of improvement that need to be addressed through the next several years?

- Schuetze Building make-over
- Animal/geese/pets waste
- Vandalism and graffiti
- Lack of public awareness
- Facilities not getting enough attention (Frame Park, Buchner Park, Buchner Pool open hours), Restroom facilities not being open early enough
- Continue to connect trails throughout city
- Raise money through private funding
- Expand teen services/programs
- Lack of adequate funding to fulfill mission
- Lack of recognition that programs are essential to Waukesha quality of life

Participants were asked “How satisfied are you with the quality of current programs offered?”

What specific qualities assisted in making your decision?

- Variety, meeting needs of so many people and affordable, do so much with so little
- Festivals and parades
- 100 Best Communities Winner in part due to PRF
- West subdivision plan with parks
- Quality has declined for before & afterschool programs



Analyzing the research in its entirety, the SWOT Analysis provides a snapshot of the organization by highlighting key strengths, areas of improvement, opportunities and threats.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Gold Medal and Accredited Agency • Reputation • Quality of programs and people • Number of parks & variety of Facilities • Trails and pathways • Responsive to community • Forestry operations • Wide range of affordable programs • Utilize resources efficiently • Community partnerships • Collaboration internally and with the City • Highly trained staff – certifications • Longevity and experience of staff • Serving the underserved • Safe parks • Multi-Website communications • Activity Guide • Pools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teen programming • Limited environmental education opportunities • Need to increase self-promotion – more marketing • Limited dog friendly parks • Not enough winter sports activities • Limited dual language communication • Improve social media reach • Website navigation complicated
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand social media • New revenue generating programs and facilities • Continue expansion of volunteerism • Expand trail connections • Increase public awareness of Dept. services • Further expand special events • More winter activities • Environmental education • Private sector – collaborations • Mindiola baseball/soccer complex • New Buchner Pool • Undeveloped park land • Park maintenance attention to detail • Foster sustainability practices • Revitalize adult & youth sports programming and related facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition for funding • Unfunded mandates • Aging facilities and infrastructure • Competing services • Weather challenges • Emerald Ash Borer • Mental illness/Drug addiction • Safety in Parks • Homeless challenges • Availability of seasonal workers • Animal waste in parks

Strategic Planning

PLANNING PROCESS

The purpose of the strategic planning process was to:

- Understand the department's strengths and challenges as viewed from inside and outside the organization
- Use the assessment feedback along with key elements from the existing strategic plan and the needs of the WPRF staff to create a vision for 2018-2022
- Define goals to achieve the vision
- Consider the initiatives started in the previous plans and build on them in the 2018-2022 plan
- Create action plans to define how to achieve goals with defined timeframes and responsibilities
- Determine how to maintain the momentum generated at the planning session to the successful completion of the plan over the next five-year period

The Strategic Planning process identified key findings from extensive community outreach and internal/external assessment that provided the direction for the updates to the plan. The report provides highlights on the planning process and approach that incorporated a SWOT analysis and Community Needs Assessment. The given action plans define how goals will be achieved, by whom and when.

WPRF wants this plan to remain dynamic and to not lose momentum post-planning. To this end, the department has defined an annual plan review process. These planning sessions will allow for the appropriate review of strategies, goals and objectives and most importantly allow the department to redefine action steps as internal and external needs change, and provide an opportunity to celebrate their accomplishments.

WPRF recognizes that this plan defines important departmental change. They understand that these changes will require new energy, teamwork and collaboration inside and outside of their department. They know that their commitment to this change is critical to the long-term success and growth of WPRF and have already begun to implement the plan.

As a result of the indicated Strategic Planning Process, the following Action Plans were developed and begin on the next page.